
FEATURE ARTICLES

The Defense Contract Management Agency Providing the Warfighters With Contract Management and Acquisition Life-Cycle Solutions

**By
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Although federal weapons suppliers and military program managers are well aware of the capabilities of the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), most of our men and women in uniform have never heard of it, nor realize how important it is to their lives.

The Department of Defense (DoD) established DCMA as an independent combat support agency on March 27, 2000, splitting it off from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA).

The Agency's management structure comprises of a Headquarters in Northern Virginia, three districts, East, headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts; West headquartered in Carson, California; the International District co-located with the Headquarters; and 67 Contract Management Offices (CMOs) around the world. The 11,400 DCMA contract management professionals in plants throughout the United States and 400 personnel in 26 countries around the world manage 360,000 prime contracts worth \$900 billion.

DCMA employees ensure that contractors and suppliers deliver weapons systems, services and supplies to the armed forces at the right place, the right time, and for the best price. Even before a contract is awarded, DCMA helps customers construct effective solicitations, select capable companies and write contracts with less risk. After the contract is awarded, DCMA monitors the contractors' performance through data tracking, analysis and on-site surveillance.

What does this mean to the warfighter? Just ask Army Private Jason Ashline, who is alive today because equipment that was inspected by DCMA quality specialists functioned as it was intended. Ashline's story, recently reported in the *New York Daily News*, illustrates the impact that DCMA has on the safety and security of America's front-line troops. According to the news report, Ashline was shot twice in the chest during a bitter gun battle with al Qaeda fighters in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. He survived when the rounds were stopped by his body armor. "I was pretty scared because I didn't feel any pain," Ashline said. "I thought, 'What's wrong?' I thought maybe I was dead." There was nothing wrong. The body armor worked as it was supposed to because the men and women of DCMA made sure of it.

Private Ashline's account illustrates DCMA's Combat Support Agency role of ensuring that America's armed forces get the high quality products and services they require. But to envision the full meaning of this, it is important to understand the organization's mission.

The DCMA Mission

Provide customer focused acquisition support and contract management services to ensure warfighter readiness, 24/7 worldwide.

Much like a strategic business unit within a large corporation, DCMA ensures that contractors and suppliers deliver weapons systems, services and supplies to the federal customer at the right

place, the right time, and for the best price. Our professionals serve as “Information Brokers” for buying agencies not just during the acquisition cycle, but throughout the entire life of the contract. We interact with our customers, including the various Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration program management offices, to ensure that the contracts are meeting their needs and their standards.

Before a contract is awarded, DCMA provides pre-contractual advice to customers to help them construct effective solicitations, identify potential performance risks, select capable companies and write contracts that are easily administered with less risk of costly modifications. After the contract is awarded, DCMA assesses the contractor’s system to ensure deliverables, costs and schedules comply with the terms and conditions of the contract. The Agency monitors the contractor’s performance through data tracking, analysis and on-site surveillance, and provides program-specific assistance in direct coordination with the customer. The end result of this contract management activity is to ensure that warfighters deployed around the world can perform their missions twenty-four hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

Over the past several months, DCMA has adopted a number of significant changes in its management philosophy to increase the options employees may choose in providing contract management services. Agency leadership has adopted these changes as part of an alignment to the DoD military transformation goals. But it is not just about conformance with DoD. Inspired by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, DCMA transformation efforts are more about adopting innovative concepts in how we conduct business day to day. We are encouraging innovations that will improve services by aligning ourselves more closely with our customers and then tailoring our support activities to focus on their specific requirements. Then we are going to grade ourselves based upon how we meet those expectations. We believe that working with our customers and the contractors to identify high risk areas and then focusing on them will make us more efficient and more effective.

The Combat Support Agency Mission

The Combat Support Agency designation is an important development and a significant expansion of the role DCMA performed as a command under DLA. Although combat support is not new to DCMA, what changed is that we are now performing many of the direct interface functions that DLA used to perform for us. One significant development is that as DCMA director, I now have two bosses. I receive functional oversight from Pete Aldridge, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, and operational oversight from General Richard B. Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff. The Joint Staff and the warfighting combatant commanders (formerly known as the commanders-in-chief) are now DCMA’s direct customers and they are responsible for overseeing the agency’s operational activities.

DCMA Combat Support Responsibilities

- Conduct contingency and wartime planning with the warfighting combatant commanders.
- Train and prepare DCMA personnel for operational deployments and support warfighter readiness.
- Deploy DCMA personnel with military forces to support contingency operations.
- Support joint exercises.
- Support DoD modernization efforts.
- Mobilize defense industry support for combatant command operations.
- Manage for results to ensure that all products meet the requirements.

We are leaning forward to establish closer working relationships with the Joint Staff and the combatant commanders. When the situation dictates it, DCMA places a senior civilian operations officer at the Joint Staff to work critical interface issues. We are also establishing military operations officer with four of the combatant commands. That way we will have proponents for DCMA who can keep a pulse on what is important to the combatant commanders. Their feedback continuously flows into our planning processes and our thinking as to how we approach our combat support mission.

September 11, 2001

When DCMA became a separate combat support agency in 2000, we established a combat support center (CSC) to perform communications and emergency planning for all actions and events that affect defense contractors. The center was assigned two major responsibilities:

- To be a central communication and integration link between DCMA, the Joint Staff and the field activities; and
- To establish the policy for how DCMA is to perform as a stand-alone Combat Support Agency.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on America was a defining event that forged the agency's role in warfighter readiness, and the CSC became the nerve center that allowed DCMA to quickly expand its support to homeland defense and to the Afghanistan contingency operation. My first actions in the hours following the tragic events were to alert agency personnel about the attacks, organize the DCMA Headquarters Crisis Action Team (CAT) and stand up the CSC. I met with team leaders, communicated with our East, West and International District offices and focused on two main areas: accounting for all DCMA staff and determining how the agency could support our military customers. Office of the Secretary of Defense officials insisted at the outset that DCMA be involved in the whole range of actions from industrial analysis to delivery of weapons systems, to acceptance of aircraft, to finding where we could overcome shortages in clothing, munitions, arms, weapons systems and spares.

The CSC immediately began operating 24/7, with representatives from each staff section either present or on call. This communications interlink was the heart of what we needed to do as an agency during the crisis to funnel information in and out. Although my staff had a steep learning curve in the early days, the CSC functioned well and allowed us to anticipate customer needs by studying available information, and then merge the shortages with customer priorities. Our team integration, sense of purpose and customer focus provided faster responses and better insights than I had hoped for at the outset of the operation.

The CSC collected information from the CMOs and from the Joint Staff about customer requirements that had to be urgently addressed by accelerated deliveries of equipment and spare parts, re-routing of spare parts or other requirements. In addition, DCMA used our special capabilities, such as the Industrial Analysis Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to help identify vendors who might be needed to provide additional responses for supplies, components or weapons systems. The Districts stood up smaller versions of the CSC, directly linked to CMOs throughout the world.

The DCMA Intent
We enable the warfighter to win!

Key to enabling our armed forces to defend our nation is the ability to anticipate change and plan for countering future threats. The DCMA Industrial Analysis Center is a one-of-a-kind organization that analyzes the nation's future industrial base and its capabilities for meeting our military needs. On September 11, 2001 this group of skilled industrial specialists, economists, industrial engineers and computer programmer analysts linked up with Headquarters and the Districts and established their own combat support center with 24/7 operations. Their mission was

to provide the industrial surge analysis required for warfighter operations around the world. When questions from DoD leaders began flowing in, the Center was able to respond in a day, on average, and within a few short hours for many requests.

Deploying Teams Augment CMOs

To support the warfighters in the various theaters of operations, DCMA organizes deployable teams to augment the CMO staffs. The teams, known as Contingency Contract Administration Services (CCAS) teams, allow DCMA to provide the full range of contract support services to the customers without disrupting the already heavy workflow of the CMO. CCAS team members are active duty members, reservists and civilians who are *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act* (DAWIA) qualified.

CCAS teams have supported nearly every major contingency operation including: the Persian Gulf, Rwanda, Haiti, Somalia, Surinam, Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania. In September 2002, a team was deployed to the Republic of Georgia to support American forces on the ground training the Georgian army, and we are on the ground in current activities in Southwest Asia. As our armed forces rely more heavily on contractors for battlefield support, CCAS teams will provide the front-line management of all of the contracts that cover all of the beans, bullets, clothing, fuel and facilities.

Streamlining for Tomorrow

Today, DCMA is a leading agent in the DoD transformation process and we are harnessing the amazing technology of today to meet the uncertain challenges of tomorrow. The agency continues to embrace modern business practices to streamline our operations, reduce waste and enhance performance. Our planning, flexibility and responsiveness will provide our customers what they need before they know they want it, and we will provide solutions throughout the acquisition life cycle. It is an innate truth that we can count on our warfighters to meet the challenges of this new century, whether they spring from the untamed forces of nature or the unbridled forces of evil. They need the dedicated support of our leaders in Washington and they need dedicated visionary support from us. DCMA will be there to ease their burden as they defend America. We enable the warfighter to win!

About the Author

Army Brigadier General Edward M. Harrington became the DCMA Director on February 9, 2001. In this role, he is the senior contract manager responsible for ensuring that all DoD acquisition programs, supplies and services are delivered on time, within cost and meet performance standards. Harrington holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Northeastern University and a master's degree in contracting and acquisition management from the Florida Institute of Technology. In 1992, he was selected to attend the Senior Service College Fellowship Program at the University of Texas, Austin. He is joint service certified and a member of the Army's Acquisition Corps. Harrington is also certified as a Level III in both program management and contracting.